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Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour
... a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

December Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term December average:

Great Lakes Basin	92%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	108%
Lake Superior	73%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	94%

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Cold Weather Leads to Significant Lake-effect Snow

A dramatic shift to colder temperatures late in December caused increased evaporation from the Great Lakes and led to significant lake-effect snowfalls in traditional snowbelt areas throughout the region.

Although monthly mean water levels on all lakes, except Lakes Michigan-Huron, increased from November to December, daily levels on each lake started to decline during the final week of December as a result of the evaporation of water from lakes. Water levels on all of the Great Lakes, except Lake Ontario, are expected to continue to decline during the month of January.

Compared to their long-term levels for the beginning of January, Lake Superior was 11 cm below average. Lakes Michigan-Huron were 34 cm below average. Lake St. Clair was 20 cm below average and Lake Erie was 12 cm below average. Lake Ontario, on the other hand, was at its long-term average level. Montréal Harbour's monthly mean water level was 5.94 m in December, 66 cm below the 1967-2000 period-of-record average for the month.

The last ship of the 2001 Seaway season exited the section of the Seaway between Lake Ontario and Montréal on December 24th. The New York Power Authority crew completed installation of the Lake Erie - Niagara River Ice Boom on December 22nd.

Concerned about Water Levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River?

Here's an opportunity for you to voice your concerns regarding water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. The International Joint Commission (IJC) has established the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Board to assess and evaluate the Orders of Approval and current criteria used for regulating water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. Subscribe to the Study Board's newsletter, Ripple Effects, to learn more about the Study and how you can participate in its activities. To receive the Winter 2002 edition of Ripple Effects, please visit the Study website at: www.losl.org and subscribe on-line. To receive the Winter 2002 edition of Ripple Effects, be sure to subscribe by February 15, 2002.

Lake Ontario 99%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

December Outflows From the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term December average:

Lake Superior 95%

Lake Erie 96%

Lake Huron 93%

Lake Ontario 90%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

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Summary Information for "LEVEL*news*"

IJC Public Hearings

The International Joint Commission (IJC) will hold public hearings in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario to gather information about the impacts of peaking and ponding operations in the St. Marys River.

Peaking and ponding operations are carried out by the Edison Sault Electric Company and Great Lakes Power Limited to store water during times of off-peak demand and increase hydroelectric power generation during times of peak demand.

The IJC has asked the International Lake Superior Board of Control (Board) to review the current situation and recommend whether peaking and ponding operations in the St. Marys River should continue, and if so, under what circumstances. The public hearings are intended to provide information that may be useful to the Board in preparing its report. The public hearings will take place at the following times and locations:

January 28th at 3:00 p.m.
Walker Cisler Center
Lake Ontario Room
Lake Superior University
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan

January 28th at 7:00 p.m.
Holiday Inn Waterfront
Room: Thompson A & B
208 St. Mary's River Drive
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

Lake Ontario Outflow Strategy

The International St. Lawrence River Board of Control (Board) met on December 14th to consider existing and potential future water level and supply conditions. In light of their assessment, the Board announced the following outflow strategy for following three months:

Generally, outflows specified by Plan 1958-D will be followed. The Board will use opportunities, if any, for under-discharge to conserve up to an additional 5 cm of water on Lake Ontario. Such opportunities might arise if outflows are reduced to below Plan 1958-D specified amounts to assist in ice formation, or due to limited hydropower generation capacity. Critical needs of hydropower and navigation will be met. The Board intends to review this strategy in mid-February, or before if conditions require.

1998 Ice Storm Remembered

The severe ice storm that struck eastern Canada in early January 1998 caused difficulties for operation of the St. Lawrence River flow control structures. At the peak of the ice storm there were widespread power outages due to downed power lines and towers. This led the International St. Lawrence

River Board of Control to direct large temporary reductions in flows at hydroelectric power plants in the St. Lawrence River. These difficulties were compounded by limitations on flow necessary to help the formation of a strong and smooth ice cover on the St. Lawrence River. The reduced outflows combined with very heavy precipitation led to a 44 cm increase in Lake Ontario's water level from the beginning to the end of January 1998.

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URL: http://www.on.ec.gc.ca/water/level-news/ln200201_e.html